

# How Lieut. Warneford Destroyed a Zeppelin Single Handed



A Method of Dropping Bombs by Hand Employed by English Aviators in Attacking Zeppelins.

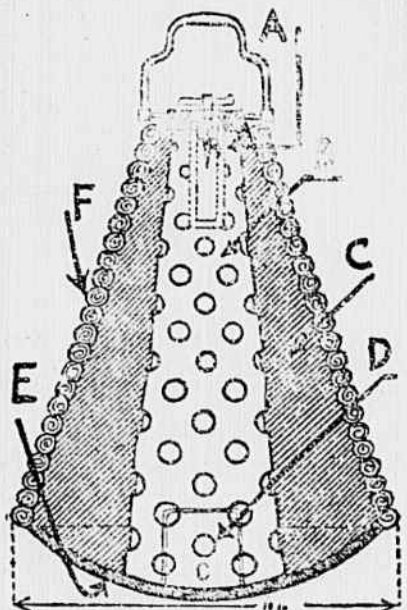
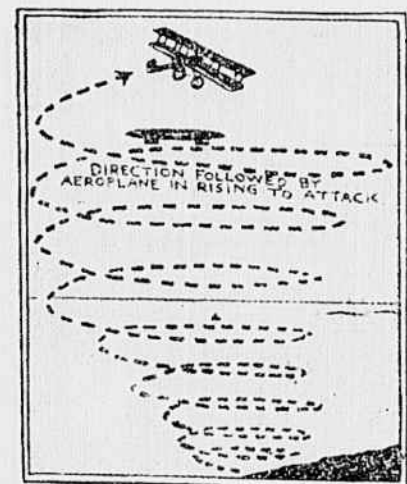
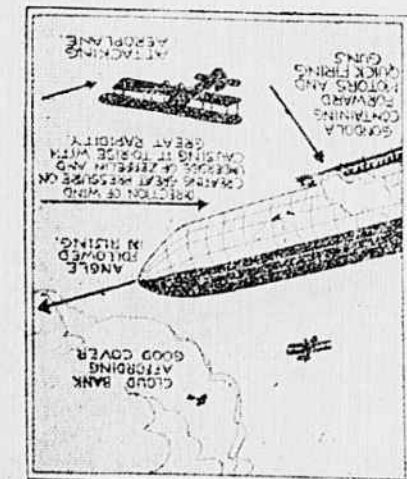


Diagram of an Incendiary Air Bomb. A, Device Which Ignites the Bomb When It Strikes. B, "Funnel Filled With 'Thermit' Which On Ignition Generates Heat at a Temperature of 5,000 Degrees Fahrenheit Scattering Molten Metal All About. C, Padding of Highly Inflammable Resinous Material Which Ignites the 'Thermit.' D, Melted White Phosphorus at the Bottom Which Develops Poisonous Fumes. E, Metal Case of Bomb.



How Warneford's Aeroplane Had to Chase the Zeppelin by Rising in Spirals, a Slower Method Than That Which Enables Zeppelins to Ascend to Great Heights.



How Zeppelins and Aeroplanes Manoeuvre to Take Advantage of Weather Conditions in Fighting.

**The Man Who Won the First Victory of Its Kind in Human History Describes the Epic Fight Between the David and the Goliath of the Air**

**S**UB-LIEUTENANT REGINALD A. J. WARNEFORD, of the British Navy Flying Corps, received the Victoria Cross for having single-handed destroyed a Zeppelin on June 7. This was everywhere acclaimed as the most remarkable flying exploit of the war, the only case in which an aeroplane had destroyed a Zeppelin in the air. On July 17 Warneford was killed while flying near Buc in France. Before his tragic and untimely death he had given the following most interesting account of his great exploit to a representative of this newspaper in France:

**By Sub-Lieutenant Reginald A. Warneford,**  
of the Flying Corps, British Navy, the Young English Aviator Who Received the Victoria Cross for Destroying a Zeppelin Single-Handed.

**I**HAVE had the good luck to be credited with bringing down the first Zeppelin destroyed by a monoplane in this war.

It was really quite an easy thing to do and would have been done just as easily and effectively by any other man in our service if he had had the opportunity.

In the night of June 7-8 three of us, Lieutenant J. P. Wilson, Lieutenant J. Mills and myself, were sent out in an air reconnaissance over the German lines in Belgium. We started out in the dark, calculating that we should have daylight by the time we were in a position to do any damage or gain any information of importance. We were guided by our compasses, which we could see by our electric lamps. All of us were using small, swift Morane monoplanes.

At about 8:30 in the morning, when a cold gray dawn was breaking through the sky, we found ourselves just north of the city of Brussels. Descending a little toward the earth we were able to distinguish the big Zeppelin hangar built by the Germans at Evere, in Belgium.

My companions then rose a little higher until they were exactly over the hangar. One after another, they let fly their bombs. Several found their mark and I saw a sheet of flame, seeming as colossal as a cosmic catastrophe, shoot out from the hangar. I believe it reached a height of almost five hundred feet. It was the exploding gas.

For the moment there was no room for me in this work. My comrades, having done all the damage possible to the hangar and used all their ammunition, turned and went home to their camp.

I flew on to look for some other opportunity of using my ammunition. It was just five o'clock in the morning when I perceived on the horizon, about midway between Ghent and Brussels, a Zeppelin moving rapidly with the wind at a height of about 1,000 feet.

I immediately flew toward the monster, and in spite of its speed I easily overtook it with my swift monoplane.

The Zeppelin at once opened fire on me with its rapid fire guns, to which I was powerless to reply. At the same time it rose in the air, taking advantage of its superior ability to rise quickly.

The Zeppelin can rise immediately by throwing out ballast or can attain the same object by merely pointing its nose into the wind and using its elevating planes to raise the forward end.

As quickly as I could I shifted my elevating planes, for the bullets were flying round me and my life depended on climbing higher than the enemy.

I fed more fuel to my motors and began to fly round in spirals as fast as I could. That was my only way rising.

The Zeppelin shot up at first like an arrow and quickly went above me. But she soon reached the limit of her ascending capacity.

I kept on climbing madly upward through the air. At the end of twenty minutes of fierce struggle I had beaten the monster. All the time I could hear the drumming of the bullets round me. I could also catch glimpses of the big crew busily manipulating their airship and trying to destroy me.

At last I reached a point far above them, where I felt that I was reasonably safe and had the mastery over them. My instruments showed me that I was 6,000 feet up in the air.

I knew that if I could blow large enough holes in the top of the Zeppelin I could sink her, because that would let her gas out. Shots and missiles striking from below have little effect on the vast bulk of those airships. They are built up of nine or more small balloons, or "ballonets," placed within the large one. Several of these may be destroyed before the Zeppelin falls. When the envelope is penetrated on the under side the gas hardly escapes at all.

I reached a point several hundred feet above the Zeppelin and looking down saw that I had a fair chance of dropping a bomb on her. I touched the trigger and down went thirty pounds of high explosive and combustible.

A flash and a bang! I saw that I had torn a hole in the Zeppelin's envelope. But, she was not seriously injured and was not going to give up the fight.

Again and again I let drop a bomb on her until I had nearly used up my stock. I saw that I had made several hits—three or four, probably—but they were not enough to sink her. I began to fear she would escape me.

I circled down until I seemed almost on top of the leviathan. Then I deliberately and carefully touched the trigger and let fall my last bomb.

It struck fairly in the middle of the back of the vast monster.

The earth below me, with its pattern of cities and military camps, and the Zeppelin itself were blotted out, while the sky seemed filled with flame and smoke.

The entire Zeppelin had taken fire and exploded.

The explosion caught me in its whirl and turned me upside down almost before I knew what had happened. If I had not been strapped to my seat I should have fallen out.

Falling rapidly and struggling desperately for control of my machine, I managed to clutch the lever and throw it over after I had gone two thousand feet.

The shock of turning was so great that I looped-the-loop and found myself upside down again. I was in danger of being dashed to pieces on the earth. Not a moment too soon, I succeeded in righting the machine and guiding the direction of my fall. Swiftly I glided to an open field within the German lines.

Thousands of German soldiers must have seen my fight with the Zeppelin in the air and knew where I landed. Fortunately there were none of them in the immediate vicinity of my landing, but they opened fire on me from various distances with rifles and artillery.

One of my reservoirs was perforated by a bullet. I stopped to transfer the gasoline to the other tank and then started my machine. I had been on the ground thirty-five minutes, and was under a hot fire all the time. At first I ran into a fog and finally landed near Cap Grinez, in France, twenty feet from the edge of a cliff.

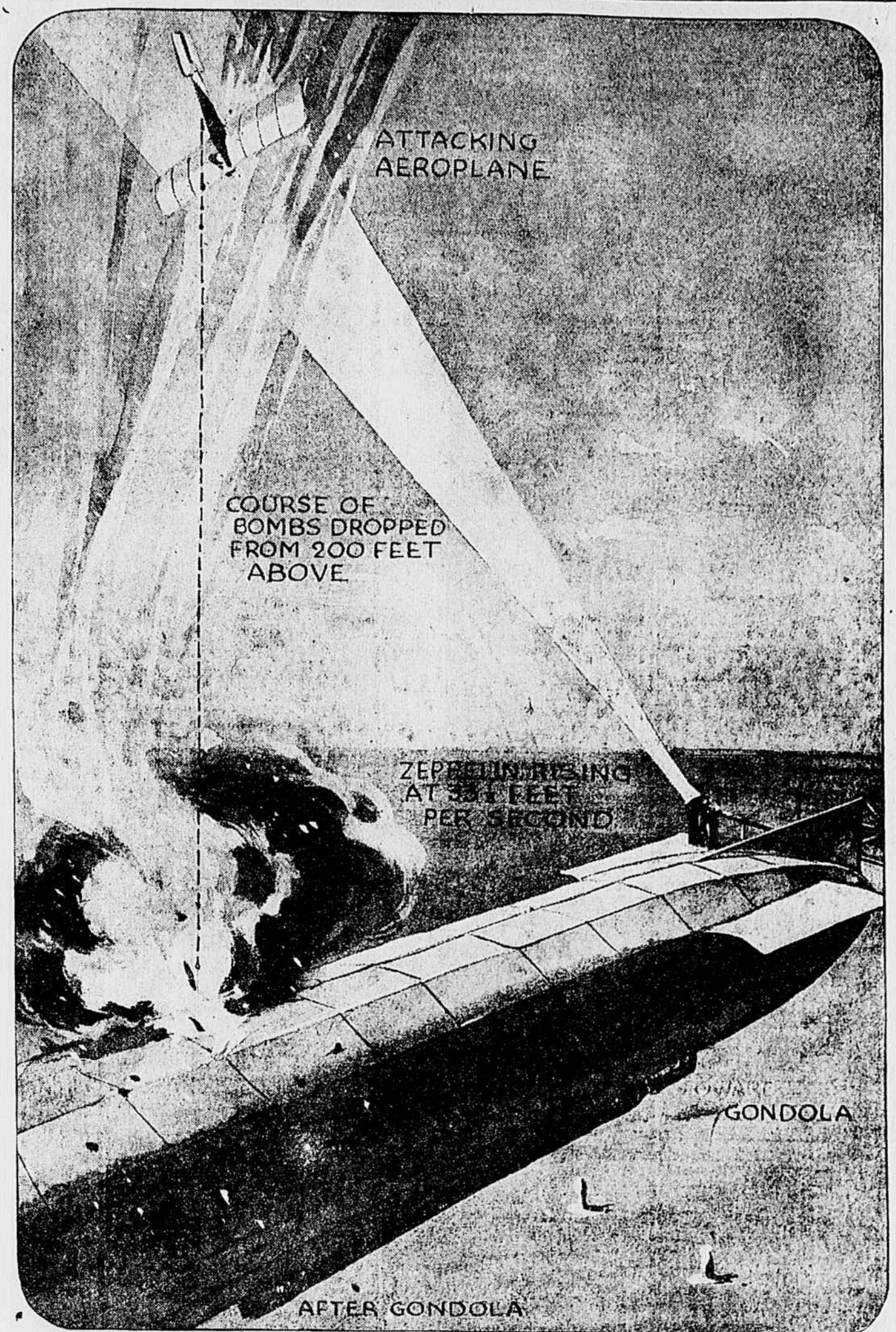
I had lost sight of the Zeppelin in my own troubles over the explosion. Afterward I learned that every one of her twenty-eight men had perished. Every scrap of combustible material on her was burned up by the gas explosion and the crew were burned to cinders at the same time.

As the lifeless monster, deprived of its lifting force, fell to the ground, its framework crashed through the roof of an orphanage at Ghent called the "Grand Beuginage de St. Elizabeth," and killed two nuns and two children and injured twenty others. Even in death it had done evil.

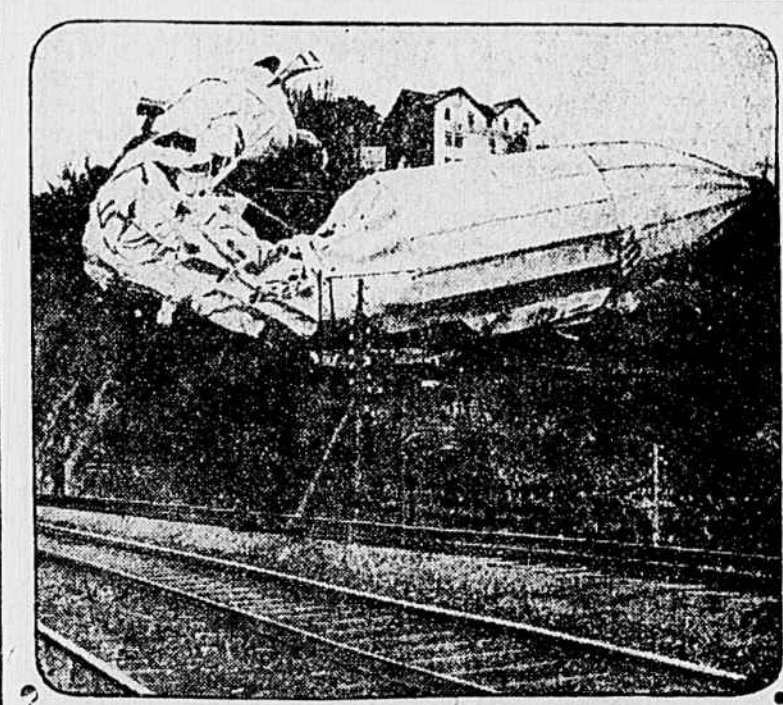
I believe that the Zeppelin I had the good fortune to destroy was the very one that passed over the English watering place Ramsgate on Sunday and killed one woman and four children and wounded forty unarmed civilians. The Zeppelin left the English coast between two and three o'clock in the morning and its speed and the state of the wind would have permitted it to be in the position near Brussels when I encountered it. This fact naturally adds to one's satisfaction in having put an end to the career of such a murdering air pirate.

There are many facts about these air encounters which our army and navy authorities will not permit us to reveal, but there are also many which we wish to impress on the British public.

The Zeppelin cannot be used as a serious weapon of attack against troops and fortifications because it offers an enormous target for a gun and because it has too little capacity for aiming accurately with its guns or bombs. These monster airships have made themselves remarkable only by indiscriminate killing of civilians in



**Pictorial Diagram Showing How Warneford's Aeroplane After Manoeuvring Successfully for Position Above the Zeppelin Rained Bombs Upon It Finally Causing Its Entire Gas Contents to Explode, Sending the Monster a Wreck to the Earth and Killing All Its Crew.**



**Wreck of a Zeppelin, Lying on a Railroad Embankment, Showing the Vast Bulk of the Airship.**

One advantage claimed for the Zeppelin is that it can attack at night. With its capacity to remain aloft for a long period it is able to spend the night in the air waiting for an opportunity to throw bombs at some carelessly displayed light or else waiting for the dawn. In this work it is helped by the fact that the men are protected against exposure by their large car and have plenty of room for the use of observation instruments. We are preparing to meet this difficulty by learning to fly our aeroplanes at night by compass. If a man starts by compass two hours before dawn he will arrive in the heart of the enemy's territory at a time when there is sufficient light for him to work by and when his attacks will be most unexpected and most unwellcome.

A bomb planted on the house of some German prince or general just when he is turning over for his last half hour's snooze will surely cause some disturbance among the ruling classes of that delightful country.

We have hundreds of young aviators who can do the trick. I only had three months' training in the aviation school at Hendon before I was placed in this service. I went to the school from Canada five months ago. It is scarcely necessary to say that what I did many other men can do.

I venture to say that the Germans will live to regret the day when they first used a Zeppelin in war.